

The report has been endorsed by hundreds of grassroots organizations and religious leaders from the evangelical, Catholic, Jewish and Orthodox communities. I urge all Members to read the attached executive summary and the full report as we continue to address the problem of youth violence and delinquency.

"THERE IS A VIRUS LOOSE WITHIN OUR CULTURE:" AN HONEST LOOK AT MUSIC'S IMPACT
(By Thomas L. Jipping)

After two teenagers killed twelve of their peers, a teacher, and themselves at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, Governor Bill Owens said that "there is a virus loose within our culture." The effort to identify that virus is properly focusing on visually powerful elements of youth culture such as television, movies, and video games. This report addresses whether non-visual media such as popular music are also part of this cultural virus that can help lead some young people to violence.

Five days after the massacre, on NBC's Meet the Press, host Tim Russert reported that the Littleton killers idolized shock-rocker Marilyn Manson, described by even the music press as an "ultra-violent satanic rock monstrosity." They were not alone. Kip Kinkel, who murdered his parents and two students in Springfield, Oregon, consumed Manson's message. Andrew Wurst, who killed a teacher at an eighth-grade dance in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, was nicknamed "Satan" because he "was a fan of rocker Marilyn Manson and his dark music." Luke Woodham, who murdered his parents and a classmate in Pearl, Mississippi, was a fan of Manson's "nihilistic" lyrics.

This pattern includes other violent youths whose plans were foiled. A Leesburg, Virginia, boy suspended for making threats against students who mocked his work was fascinated with Marilyn Manson. Five Wisconsin teenagers who had planned "a bloodbath at their school in revenge for being teased" consumed Manson's message.

Some claim this is all just a coincidence. Perhaps, but a series of parallels suggests a more concrete connection. The first is the parallel between the facts of these cases, the motivation of the killers, and the themes in the music they consumed. According to media reports, these boys all killed out of hatred for, or revenge against, those who had offended, harassed, or persecuted them. Luke Woodham, for example, had said that "the world has wronged me."

Consider what their idol Marilyn Manson told them to do about it:

*"The big bully try to stick his finger in my chest, try to tell me, tell me he's the best. But I don't really give a good * * * cause I got my lunchbox and I'm armed real well. . . . Next * * * gonna get my metal. . . . Pow pow pow, pow pow pow, pow pow pow, pow pow pow. . . . I wanna grow up so no one * * * with me
"But your selective judgments and goodguy badges don't mean a * * * to me. I throw a little fit. I slit my teenage wrist. . . . Get your gunn, get your gunn
"I hate the hater, I'd rape the raper
"There's no time to discriminate, hate every * * * that's in your way.
"There is no cure for what is killing me, I'm on my way down; I've looked ahead and saw a world that's dead, I guess I am too; I'm on my way down, I'd like to take you with me
"I'll make everyone pay and you will see . . . The boy that you loved is the monster you fear.
"When you are suffering know that I have betrayed you*

*"Shoot here and the world gets smaller; Shoot shoot shoot * * **

"Live like a teenage christ; I'm a saint, got a date with suicide

*"I'm dying, I hope you're dying too
"I'm gonna hate you tomorrow because you make me hate you today"*

The second parallel is the message Manson himself says he tries to promote. Ordained in the Church of Satan, Manson has said that "[Church of Satan founder Anton] LaVey along with Nietzsche and [British Satanist Aleister] Crowley have all been great influences on the way that I think." In a foreword to the book *Satan Speaks*, Manson wrote that "Anton LaVey was the most righteous man I've ever known."

On CNN's *The American Edge* program, Manson explained his message: "God is dead, you are your own god. It's a lot about self preservation. . . . It's the part of you that no longer has hope in mankind. And you realize that you are the only thing you believe in." Manson has compared Christians to Nazis and insists that "hate is just as healthy and worthwhile as love." This message contributes to the situation Vice President Al Gore described at a Littleton memorial service on April 25, 1999: "Too many young people place too little value on human life."

The third parallel is Manson's own life, which looks similar to those who consume and act on his message. In one interview, he described it this way: "Then I had to go to public school and they would always kick my ass. . . . So I didn't end up having a lot of friends and music was the only thing I had to enjoy. So I got into [heavy metal rock bands] Kiss, Black Sabbath and things like that."

While Marilyn Manson alone is not the problem, his brand of music promotes violence more aggressively than ever. Indeed, Manson's own response to the Littleton massacre raises the issue to be addressed here. Television or even religion may cause youth violence, he says, but music plays no role whatsoever. In fact, he claims that he is actually a victim when he asserts that the media "has unfairly scapegoated the music industry. . . . and has speculated—with no basis in truth—that artists like myself are in some way [sic] to blame."

Unfortunately, it appears that the music industry's only response to this cultural crisis is simply to deny that its products have any effect on anyone. One the June 29, 1999, edition on CNN's *Showbiz Today* program, for example, musician Billy Joel dismissed as "absurd" the idea that music influences violent behavior. Elton John put it more bluntly: "It has nothing to do with the musical content or the lyrics whatsoever. [The idea is] absolute rubbish."

No one, or course, argues that popular music is the sole cause of youth violence. Something as complex as human behavior does not have a sole cause. The question is not whether popular music is the exclusive cause of youth (something no one seriously argues), but whether there is any "basis in truth" for the proposition that some popular music makes a real contribution to youth (something only the music industry denies).

The affirmative answer to this question rests on three pillars. First, media such as television and music are very powerful influences on attitudes and behavior. Second, popular music in an even more powerful influence on young people. Third, some of the most popular music today promotes destructive behavior such as violence and drug use.

Effective prescriptions require accurate diagnoses. Whether the solution involves parental involvement, public policy, pressure on recording companies or retailers to change their practices, or all of these and more, the effort must be informed by a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

TONI PARKS, GUEST LECTURER
FOR THE RC HICKMAN YOUNG
PHOTOGRAPHERS WORKSHOP

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 29, 1999

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the constituents of the 30th Congressional District of Texas, the residents of Dallas and my colleagues in the House of Representatives in taking great pleasure to proclaim July 31st, 1999 as "Toni Parks Day."

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Toni Parks is an internationally acclaimed photographer whose works have appeared in prominent magazines and newspapers throughout the U.S. and Europe. Her pictures have appeared in *Stagebill*, *American Visions*, *USIA*, *Life* and *Arts*, to name a few. Toni Parks has been featured in numerous exhibitions including the Look Gallery, Tony Green Gallery in England, Columbia University, and the Martin Luther King Gallery. Her photos consist of fashion and beauty as only Toni Parks can vision. In her years as a photographer, she has received critical acclaim for her works of art.

Toni Parks will take the podium to share her experiences with the students and enthusiasts of the RC Hickman Young Photographers Workshop at the South Dallas Cultural Center, located on the corner of Robert B. Cullum and Fitzhugh. The program is presented each year by the Artist and Elaine Thornton Foundation For the Arts, Inc., a non-profit organization established to educate, promote and embrace the arts of all disciplines including drama, dance, visual, and music. Its mission is to bring about positive social awareness to the inner city community, using art as a tool for positive social change.

We salute you Toni Parks.

Therefore, I ask that all citizens of Dallas join in celebrating July 31st, 1999 as "Toni Parks Day."

RECOGNIZING JACQUE CORTEZ

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 29, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jacque Cortez upon her selection by Visalia-area schools as a "Good Kid." Jacque was chosen based on her academic achievements, classroom leadership, and efforts in literature and music.

The "Good Kid" program was formed in an effort to provide students with positive reinforcement. The program allows Visalia teachers to nominate students, who have excelled in academics and demonstrated a good work ethic, for recognition in the Visalia Times Delta newspaper. Those individuals selected are mentioned in a piece featured daily in the Times Delta.

Jacque Cortez, who was nominated by her fifth grade teacher, currently attends sixth grade at Willow Glen Elementary in Visalia, California. Throughout Jacque's years at Willow Glen, faculty and classmates alike have considered her a leader who is eager to learn and always willing to assist others.